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TREATMENT
OF
INDONESIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS:

FORCED LABOUR
AND
TRANSMIGRATION

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INTRODUCTION

At each of the last four sessions of the International Labour Conference, Indonesia has faced strong criticism for the treatment of its political prisoners. It has been alleged that large numbers of untried tapols(1) are compelled to work, in contravention of the Forced Labour Convention (Number 29).

Until now, Indonesia has managed to avoid serious reprimand from the ILO, first by denying that forced labour conditions exist in the country, and in recent years by stating that all political detainees will be "returned to society" or tried by the end of 1979. However, the 1977 report of the ILO Committee of Experts questioned one aspect of the Indonesian release plan, which was to transmigrate (resettle) tapols in undeveloped regions instead of releasing them to go home. The Indonesian Government has repeatedly asserted that this transmigration is voluntary.

The purpose of this paper is to dispute the claim that there is no forced labour in Indonesia and to show that there is serious doubt about whether prisoner resettlement is voluntary.

The first chapter analyses a series of official documents which form the basis of the policy for the treatment of political prisoners. As will be seen, forced labour and transmigration have been related aspects of the treatment of certain detainees, those classified as B-category, since before the time the Indonesian Government decided that they would be "returned to society".

In order to provide all those concerned with more information about the full scope of the forced labour problem in Indonesia, Chapter II presents an overview of the situation quoting letters received from prisoners and their relatives; forced labour is described by those who are compelled to engage in it.

The Buru Island Resettlement Project has been the centre of the forced labour debate. It is certainly the best documented case of the use of tapol labour. For these two reasons, we deal with it separately in Chapter III.

The final chapter discusses the present release and transmigration policy, wherever possible employing data from the December 1977 releases. We produce evidence to show that prisoners will remain isolated from society when they are resettled and that transmigration may only alter the setting under which forced labour is carried out.

It must be pointed out that the Indonesian Government has acknowledged that political prisoners have been compelled to work.

In June, 1974, Brigadier-General Sumrahadi, Defence Ministry spokesman, told a press conference that during a tour of Java in 1970 President Suharto had stopped to talk with prisoners who were doing roadwork. When journalists questioned Sumrahadi about this forced labour, he stated that it had been discontinued after 1973. (2). In other words, this report does not try to prove that prisoners must engage in forced labour. Rather, it demonstrates that they are still compelled to work.

February, 1978.

Chapter I

THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT VIEW

Although the Indonesian Government denies that political prisoners are compelled to engage in forced labour any longer, it has indicated in numberous documents that many detainees are in fact required to work. The Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (KOPKAMTIB)(1) has issued a series of guidelines that define the government's policy for settling the prisoner problem. The most important of these directives specifically discusses prisoner labour, but refers to it as"utilisation".

This important document is entitled "Implementation Guideline on the Policy for Settling G30S/PKI(2)Prisoners/Detainees." (Pelak-002/KOPKAM/10/1968). It laid down the treatment for the various categories of prisoners: A,B and C. The first were those considered by the government to have been directly involved in the G30S/PKI and who would be tried. The second group were those viewed as having been indirectly involved in the G30S/PKI, but against whom there was not enough evidence to allow for a trial. The directive specified that they would be held in prison indefinitely "for reasons of security and order". Category C prisoners were those arrested for being members of organisations which were banned. The directive states they would be released.

Pelak-002/KOPKAM/10/1968 does not discuss whether prison labour is voluntary, but it does state that B-category detainees "can" be put to work. Section IV paragraph (2f) specifies that

> the labour of detainees shall be utilised (dimanfaatkan) for productive purposes.

And Section V paragraph (3e) states:

> The labour of detainees may be utilised (dimanfaatkan) for projects within the local region or in other regions, as part of regional or national development.

The use of the Indonesian word dimanfaatkan (noun form: pemanfaatan) is singled out here because it is not the term normally used in describing a situation in which persons are employed. The word in this case would be dipekerjakan. Dimanfaatkan implies the use of something for benefit, profit or advantage(3).

Throughout this directive, the government's primary concern is with security. For example, Section V paragraph(1k) states:

> In reaching a settlement of the G30S/PKI problem, prime place should be given to security while taking account of legal provisions.(underlining added)

Section V paragraph(a) is also relevant to the security question:

> The policy for settling the detainee problem shall be implemented in a way that ensures that new social problems do not arise within society.

Because of the latter concern, KOPKAMTIB decreed in Section V paragraph(1a):

> Keeping in mind the condition of the detainee, the density of population, restricted job opportunities and other social factors in the island of Java, in principle the policy making use of (pemanfaatan) the detainees shall be implemented by means of transmigration out of Java ...

Although socio-economic reasons are identified here as the motive for transmigration, they should be seen as security problems as well. Java was the island with the sharpest social conflicts before 1965.

The government also determined transmigration to be the solution to the detainee problem in regions of Indonesia that lacked the demographic pressures that exist on Java. For example, Section V paragraph(1b) states:

> The utilisation (pemanfaatan) of detainees in places other than Java shall be carried out in principle by means of local transmigration.

Thus, it should be clear that in 1968 transmigration was primarily seen as the solution to the security problems posed by political prisoners.

In 1971 an update of the original 1968 KOPKANTIB directive was issued, Pelak-001/KOPKAM/X/1971. This document was introduced for two basic reasons. One was that the implementation of the original document had been "somewhat unsatisfactory", and the other was that the Indonesian Government had come under international pressure to release its political prisoners. Section(1c) of the introduction stated:

> .... there being such a large number of political prisoners is something which always is a target for foreign elements who do not like to see us in good and stable conditions in our struggle in the international forum for our national interests.

Presumably because of this international pressure, the second set of guidelines included one important revision of the original directive. B-category prisoners, those who previously were to be held indefinitely, were now marked for release. The 1971 document claimed that the government's intentions from the beginning had been to return all prisoners to society,(4), even though the original guidelines specifically stated otherwise. However, there were no changes made in the transmigration policy, so the detainees would apparently still be resettled, even though they were going to be released.

That this was the case is indicated by a 9 January 1974 KOPKAMTIB document entitled "Viewgraph", which outlines the policies to be followed by special teams assigned to supervise the mental rehabilitation of detainees. This directive specifically states that both the 1968 and 1971 documents formed the basis for all KOPKAMTIB programmes relating to political prisoners.

Thus, as of 1974 the government still planned to "utilise" prisoners for labour purposes, and it also was determined to resettle them permanently away from their homes. A study of the 1968, 1971 and 1974 directives shows that transmigration of prisoners, whether before or after release, has been an integral part of KOPKAMTIB policy for the past ten years. It will be shown in Chapter 4 that the Indonesian government still views transmigration as the solution to the political prisoner issue.

In order to justify their policy of "utilising" tapols, the Indonesian authorities make use of two particular arguments which contradict each other. This can be seen in the following two excerpts from government documents, the first from a 1971 report on the Buru Island Resettlement Project:

> ... under the regulation on workhouses(State Gazette No.708 of 1917) the person serving time and the detainee should wherever possible be given the opportunity to work within said social institutions either in the interest of an individual or of private bodies.
>
> Article 60 paragraph(2) of this regulation stipulates that the whole of the proceeds should go to the detainees themselves.
>
> ... the obligation to work is not meant to add penal servitude to his punishment. The same is the case with the person kept in custody, on the contrary the procuring of work will assist him in upholding his integrity as a human being.
>
> Debarring him from working would mean not respecting the position of the convicted criminal or detainee as a human being. (underlining added)(5)

This argument was employed in almost the same wording by the Indonesian Government in 1975 at the Sixtieth Session of the International Labour Conference.

The second justification for prisoner labour has been taken from a confidential government report about Buru Island which was submitted to the United Nations in 1974.

> ... in accordance with the principles of Pancasila(6) and the aim of the State to build a just and prosperous society, spiritually and materially, the popular opinion in Indonesia is that: "Everybody should work to the best of his ability"...Everybody, whether a free member of society or a detainee deprived of his freedom or still under arrest, is obliged to work within the institutions of society ... (underlining added)(7)

The Indonesian Government apparently does not recognize that these two principles conflict. The first identifies the prisoners' right to work, while the second states the obligation to do so, thus eliminating any choice in the matter. In practice, prisoners are compelled and have no alternative but to work.

It is very important to note that the reference to remuneration for labour that was made in the 1971 report is its only mention in any official government document that has reached this organisation. The KOPKAMTIB directives which outline so many important aspects of the prisoner policy do not even raise the subject. Whereas the 1971 document states that the "whole of the proceeds" should go to the prisoners, the next two chapters will show that in all documented cases, prisoners receive either nothing at all or only a small fraction of the proceeds of their labour.

Chapter II

FORCED LABOUR IN INDONESIA

Forced labour in Indonesia is by no means a localised phenomenon. It has been documented for many years that political prisoners are compelled to engage in a wide assortment of tasks ranging from menial labour to highly skilled crafts and even professional work. Reports have been and continue to be received which detail specific instances where detainees throughout the Indonesian archipelago, in Java, Kalimantan, Maluku and Sulawesi, are forced to work for little or no compensation. This labour is carried out in any number of settings ranging from large agricultural projects to military offices to officers' homes. Conditions vary as well. Whereas in some places tapols labour under armed guard, in other circumstances prisoners readily engage in the required work, presumably because it may facilitate release or provide a distraction from the monotony of prison life.

It should come as no surprise that forced labour is so common in Indonesia. The military predominates in local, provincial and national government, and it is engaged in numerous public and private sector developmental projects which employ all forms of labour. Corruption is very widespread. Under military rule political prisoners live in a harsh and inhumane environment in which they are exposed to the risk of arbitrary and often brutal treatment, and are provided with totally inadequate food and medical care. Moreover, tapols are deprived of all their rights. Using them as forced labour is an inevitable consequence of this situation.

It is not possible for foreign observers to learn the full extent of the forced labour problem. However, the geographical distribution of the places in which forced labour has been shown to have occurred is so wide, the scope of the tasks in which prisoners have had to partake so varied and the sources of information so diverse, one can only fear that what has become known to the outside world is but the tip of the iceberg.

A compilation of all the material available on the forced labour question shows that prisoners are involved in many types of work. This was described in Amnesty International's 1977 special report on Indonesia:

> Most untried prisoners are liable to be used as forced labour and can be made to work in mines, on plantations, in fisheries and on building and public works projects. Some of these projects are run by state corporations and agencies, others by private companies with whom local commanders have a financial arrangement whereby they are paid a regular sum for each drafted prisoner, out of which a very small amount, sufficient to buy only cigarettes, and thus called 'cigarette money', is given to the prisoner. Prisoners may be moved daily from their camps to a place of work; alternatively, they may be housed in temporary billets... Prisoners are also used by the local military to grow rice and vegetables and to raise livestock for the benefit of local army garrisons. They are also used as servants, as gardeners and as labourers, and in projects such as building houses and making tennis courts. For such work, they are usually given a minimal payment or nothing at all(1).

Although most documented cases of forced labour come from large projects and prisons, it is known that prisoners are scattered throughout the archipelago in smaller detention centres, and are often required to provide services to military officers. An example of this was provided in a letter received from Indonesia in late 1977 which described how the military in one office in Central Java still hold some C-category prisoners (who should have been released by 1972) and utilise them as office clerks. Another example of this use of detainees at the local level was provided by an 1976 traveller to Indonesia who by chance met a prisoner on Sulawesi. In a subsequent interview he stated:

> I saw this man on the island of Sulawesi. I came upon him in a village quite near a large town ... He said there were about 186 other prisoners there ... they were under the control of a major in the army who received money from the central government for the upkeep of the roads and various facilities in that region. He used the tapols without giving them any money whatsoever ...(2)

Many letters from prisoners, smuggled out of prison despite the grave risks involved, have given firm indication that the practices cited here are repeated in many other places. The following quote is from a 1972 letter written on behalf of 800 detainees in East Kalimantan:

> We have been forced to work on the construction of government buildings for meagre remuneration. Often we work as 'volunteers' and receive nothing at all. The officers use us as servants to wash dishes and clothes and to clean out toilets.(3)

In 1975 there came a report from Central Java of skilled prisoners being employed by a prison guard to do wood carvings and stone sculptures in the renovation of his home, thus raising its value. For this they received no money at all, just a packet of cigarettes.

An August 1974 letter from Salemba Prison, in Jakarta, told the following story of detainees growing their own food to supplement their meagre diet:

> Vegetables grown by the tapols are used in part for their own food and frequently in the recent period are also sold outside the prison, usually to the relatives who come to bring food ... cheaper than the market prices. The proceeds from these sales are naturally not for the tapols ... This 'surplus' is sold by officials of the prison. They say that the proceeds are used to supplement the food given to the prisoners. But in fact, this supplementary food never materialises ... The proceeds on a single day amount to at least Rp.2,000 and all of this enters the pockets of officials. As the amount of vegetables sold has increased, so the food allocated to the prisoners has fallen....

The same letter also described another way in which the Salemba prisoners' labour is exploited:

> Several dozen tapols who have manual skills in various fields such as carpentry, stone masonry, sewing, furniture making, handicrafts and sculpturing are accommodated together in a single block. They are made to work inside and outside the prison with no regard to the hours they have to work. One (group) of them have to work outside the prison: they usually leave at 7 a.m. and return at 5 p.m. All the proceeds of their labour fall into the hands of the authorities, while the tapols themselves only receive some privileges and some cigarette money. In one case an artist got Rp.5,000 for a painting which was sold for more than Rp.100,000.

There have been two other reports received from prisoners held in Javanese prisons which further detail the use of tapol labour by the prison authorities. The first came from Jogjakarta in Central Java:

> Those working at the workshops inside the prison, got a daily allowance of fifteen rupiahs or the equivalent of four U.S. cents ... It means now they had to work a whole month to earn Rp.420, or the equivalent of one U.S. dollar!

The second report came from a prisoner detained in Malang Prison in East Java:

> He (the prison commander) exploits their (tapol) labour without pay and uses them (for) forced labour as coolies, gardeners, servants etc. In short, they have to do all the dirty work. Some are having to work the land and the produce from their labours is sold to the tapols at prices which he himself fixes. The money is then used to buy barbed wire, locks, and other things to make camp security even tighter. Furthermore, in order to curry favour with his superior, the Divisional Commander, and/or for his own personal benefit, he compels tapols to do sculptures, carvings or paintings without given them proper remuneration or without paying them at all for their efforts. He also started up a poultry project within the prison cells for his profit. The tapols have to take care of the poultry for no pay and the proceeds all go to the commander himself. (underlining added)

The largest number of detainees have been forced to work on agricultural and forestry projects. It is in this area that the information available becomes patchy, and for obvious reasons. It is certainly not in the interests of the Indonesian government to reveal that prisoners are working on certain agricultural projects. So, one often hears only rumour of such projects. For example, a 1974 church source within Indonesia reported:

> Yesterday I heard they (specific prisoners) are going to be sent as transmigrants to Sulawesi, as plantation workers to open up rice fields, forests, with no pay. For how long? Nobody knows.

At other times one receives information about places of detention which reveals circumstances that could in fact mean that prisoners there are being used as forced agricultural labour. For example, following a 1977 tour of prisons and camps, Far Eastern Economic Review correspondent David Jenkins wrote that the Sumber-Rejo camp in East Kalimantan is "set on 36,000 hectares of State-owned land", adding that "detainees are able to grow a variety of crops ..."(4)

In August 1974 there appeared a report in Suara Karya, the newspaper of the military-sponsored party GOLKAR, which stated that a number of political detainees were being sent to the Meraramputih Project in Donggala, South Sulawesi to be

> mobilised for an agricultural project, for handicrafts etc. so as to ensure that they are kept busy and have some proper means of livelihood in the future.(5)

As this is the only mention that there has been of this camp, it adds weight to the concern that there have been many camps established that are unknown to the outside world, or even within Indonesia.

There are certain cases where the documentation available on projects is much more detailed, and verified by more than one source. The camp on which the most documentation has been collected is the Buru Island Resettlement Camp, and for this reason we will devote the whole of the next chapter to a discussion of labour conditions there. Here, we will examine a number of other camps.

The first is an agricultural project attached to Tangerang Prison, twenty-five kilometres west of Jakarta. It is described in this excerpt from a 1974 letter written by a prisoner:

> The project is the property of the Jakarta Military Command, ... The main product of the project is paddy (rice). In addition, glutinous rice, green beans and cassava are also grown. The animals reared are chickens and ducks. Other activities: brick-making. It now has a rice mill of its own, and accepts rice milling from other people.
>
> The area of the project is altogether 113 hectares. The project commenced in 1967 ... Since 1972 the project has been worked by 230 people ... The produce amounts to 2.5 tons of husked rice. The receipts from each harvest amount to about two million Rupiahs ... the tapols have to work intensively on the project. They start from Tangerang at 5.30 in the morning... For a morning repast they receive some cassava which is boiled: 40 kilograms for more than 200 persons which includes the guards .... so one can imagine how small is the portion each one receives, whereas they must do very strenuous work. At 12 noon they rest and receive an allocation of food. At 1.00 they work, until 4 p.m.

> The entire produce of the project falls into the hands of the people in control of the project and the officials working (guards etc.). Whereas the rice milling operations for outsiders produce thousands of rupiahs for the project, the workers (tapols) receive cigarette money totalling about Rp. 100 for the lot. Proceeds that go to the project also include earnings from repairing vehicles, the work being done by very skilled tapols. They too only get cigarette money. The officials in charge of this project are now rich enough to buy themselves land and to build themselves houses not far from the project.

This report has been verified by numerous sources. For example, the 1976 Amnesty International film on Indonesia, More than a Million Years, contained footage of prisoners tilling the fields at Tangerang. And a letter received from an Australian who visited Indonesia in June 1977 referred to the fact that prisoners were still working on the project.

Another labour camp that has been well-documented is Nusakembangan, an island located off the south coast of Central Java. Here there are a series of settlements that, according to a recent report, hold 2,052 prisoners. Nusakembangan was discussed at length in the recent Amnesty International report:

> Apart from the ill and the very old, all prisoners are forced to work. Each unit is surrounded by fields, created from dense tropical jungle by the prisoners and farmed by them. The prisoners have to work on rubber plantations and in forestry, to build roads, to cultivate, to do carpentry and to construct and repair buildings, to raise cattle, poultry and goats, to collect bird dropping deposits to use as fertiliser, to clean the camps, to perform services for their guards and officers by sewing and in other ways, to cook their own food, and to make handicrafts (musical instruments, toys and carvings), which are marketed by the authorities. They have to work all day, from early morning until five in the afternoon, with an hour's break at noon. They are not paid for their work; the profits go to the military administration.(6)

An earlier report in Le Monde, dated October 1, 1975, also presented similar facts. It stated that prisoners were

> compelled to forced labour as an unpaid work force to the profit of those responsible at the camp...(7)

A January 1977 letter from the wife of a tapol detained at Nusakembangan also discussed forced labour:

> In Nusakembangan, my husband had to chop wood, but as he was too weak for this because of age and ill-health, the younger men did this work for him. The younger men do heavy work as compulsory labour like building roads. Later on, my husband got another job, cleaning the camp, gardening, sweeping etc....

In addition, an article by R. Sutarjo in Suara Karya verified that the prisoners were working at the tasks described above. However, he claimed that the prisoners and military shared the proceeds of the camp's various ventures equally.(8)

A recent report sent from a source in Indonesia states that between May and November 1977 twenty-six prisoners in Nusakembangan died. The same letter reported: "They (the prisoners) almost all are mentally ill by now."

There have also been many reports about forced labour in the women's camp in Plantungan, Java. One letter from prison stated:

> In April 1971 also, about 550 women political prisoners from various prison camps in Java who were regarded as belonging to the so-called B-category, were transferred and concentrated in a special women's labour camp, cautiously concealed from the public, located in Plantungan, on the slope of the mountains in Central Java. They were sent to work at various projects, like weaving, sewing, animal husbandry, horticulture and other labour projects.

In 1971 a Dutch television news team visited Plantungan and filmed many of the women at work, and in 1977 a similar programme was produced for Dutch viewers.

Chapter III

BURU

The controversy over the use of forced labour by the Indonesians has centred on the Buru labour camp, in the Moluccan Islands, two thousand kilometres east of Java. The forced resettlement of tapols to the island of Buru was begun in 1969 with the purpose of providing a solution to the problem of B-category prisoners whom the government was unwilling to release. On Buru the prisoners could be detained, "cared for", "utilised" and hopefully rehabilitated, by developing agricultural communities where they could live and even be reunited with their families. However, from the time that the outside world learned that detainees were being sent to Buru, there has been constant dispute over labour conditions on the island. The arguments against Buru have been fuelled by eyewitness reports, inconsistencies in Indonesian Government statements and news of specific incidents on the island.

It has taken a number of years for conclusive evidence about forced labour on Buru to penetrate the web of secrecy and obstruction erected by the Indonesian Government, but the allegations can now be seen to have been accurate from the beginning. During the early 1970's the first damaging information appeared that contradicted the official Indonesian position. A series of articles were published in the western press which unequivocally criticized Buru.

The most detailed of these was written by Dom Moraes, and printed in both Asia Magazine (March 5, 1972) and the Daily Telegraph Magazine (slightly abridged, March 24, 1972). During a visit to the island, Moraes found out that the prison authorities took no responsibility for feeding the prisoners after they had been on the island for eight months. They were required to support themselves from their own farming. His article also contained the following excerpt:

> 'At first', said an officer, and pointed to the forested hills, 'all the area around the camps was like that'. He indicated some bamboo barracks to the left. 'That was all we built. The prisoners had to clear the forest to build their camps and start agriculture. The government provided equipment and seeds. The prisoners chopped down the trees for wood to build bridges and houses'.

Moraes witnessed the prisoners at work and interviewed many of them, including some of the more well-known detainees. Pramudya Ananta Toer, the novelist, and Dr. Suprapto, the law professor, told him:

> "We have to dig the fields. We report at 6 a.m. and work till 1.30 p.m. Then from 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m." Suprapto said in a husky rather weak voice, 'We can do it, but we are not very productive.'

In his article Dom Moraes also wrote:

> Certainly this is the worst thing anyone can do to a man: to imprison his mind: and it seemed to me that on Buru this was done very successfully and simply. Tire a man out with manual labour, so that he cannot think: cut him off from all news of his friends, his family, and the outside world: and it seems to me that you have imprisoned his mind behind the tallest walls possible.(1)

In 1973, Amnesty International's Dutch Section published a special 31-page bulletin on Indonesia which included a section on Buru. The report stated that the use of the island "added a dimension of permanency to the problem of political detention in Indonesia", and it also contained the following:

> ... indeed, to the political prisoners on Buru, survival depends on a twelve-hour day of arduous labour under the strict supervision of armed guards. It is a programme that applies to all alike, young and old, sick and healthy, to writers, scientists and artists who have been deprived of any opportunity to devote even part of their energies to creative work of their own choosing.(2)

After 1971, except for a brief visit by a Dutch reporter in September 1976, no foreign correspondents were allowed into Buru until December 1977. Still, the Indonesian government was unable to diffuse the controversy over the island. In 1974 a report written by a man who had visited Buru was smuggled out of the country. Although unpublished, it encouraged those who read it to continue speaking out about conditions there. The report detailed the Buru prisoners' sources of income, which were only

> proceeds from handicrafts which they made during their leisure time; for example, sculptor work, embroidery and small pieces of woodwork ... proceeds from poultry rearing: eggs and chickens.
>
> If one recognizes the energy and the skills put into the handicrafts produced by the prisoners, it must be recognised that the price received only covers the cost of the material, plus a very small pittance for the efforts put in. What they get is in no sense a price as we understand it. The best of the artists are gathered together in the (command post). In this place they do their artistic work instead of the work on the ricefields or any other agricultural work. Of course, they do not enjoy any of the proceeds of their work; they can only earn from what they produce during their leisure time ....(underlining added)

The author of this letter also described the prisoners' work responsibilities:

> They work everyday (for the same hours described above by Suprapto and Pramudya) ... they do corvee duties, during which they carry sacks of rice, fertilizer and other heavy commodities from the Murta harbour at Airmandidi up to the place of the camp which is about 20 to 21 kilometres . The prisoners are extremely hardworked and very often they get nothing to eat at all during the time they are doing this ...

This corvee work was in addition to the regular agricultural work. The report went on to describe the effect of all this labour on the prisoners:

> The prisoners get virtually no time at all to sit quietly and think. They work from morning to evening, and the evenings are occupied with religious instruction ... or else they are just too exhausted to think at all and they just go to sleep. This means that their muscles are strained through the whole day. They are on the move, working all the time, so it is quite easy to understand that a time comes when they have completely exhausted their physical energies. This is what results in the high rate of liver disorders.

Also during 1974 there occurred an incident on Buru that caused further concern in the outside world about conditions there. Reports were received about a number of tapols who had attempted to escape into the forest surrounding the camp. Of the original 48 who fled, only 21 survived the jungle to surrender. Since then, these men have been held at a special prison in Namlea, the capital of Buru.

Over the years a series of statistics have appeared in a variety of sources which detail the amount of work that has been required of the prisoners. For example, in 1974 Supeno Suparjo wrote a series of articles on Buru in the Indonesian newspaper Merdeka which stated that more than 1,000 hectares of land were planted with rice, 1,376 hectares with dry-land secondary crops like maize and cassava and 148 hectares with coconut trees. Also, industrial raw materials were cultivated on 96 hectares. The same report stated that the prisoners had built and were operating soya sauce, wood oil and beancurd factories...(3)

A confidential government document submitted to the United Nations in 1975, which described the aims and progress of the Buru Island project, augmented these statistics with additional information. It stated that 96 kilometres of roads, each at least six metres in width, had been laid out, as well as 76 kilometres of irrigation channels. Fourteen dams, numerous storehouses and 400 group houses to replace "less healthy barracks previously used" were constructed as well.(4)

However, these statistics alone do not properly describe the enormity of the tasks faced by the prisoners. For all this work they were provided with only manual tools. Hamish MacDonald was told by one prisoner in December 1977 that the original inmates of the island had to clear the first roads with their bare hands.(5) This report was corroborated by Raphael Pura in The Asian Wall Street Journal (6).

Moreover, the land on Buru is not well-suited for agriculture, so the fact that prisoners had to prepare fields for farming gives only a partial conception of the job they faced. The 1975 report to the United Nations stated that in the area under cultivation soil conditions were poor, there was a "cycle of severe fluctuation in (the) water supply" - i.e. bad seasonal flooding - and there existed a shortage of materials suitable for irrigation-related construction. Thus, the prisoners, many of whom had never before farmed, were compelled to work extremely hard in order to produce an adequate crop, something which recent reports show they have not always been able to do. For example, in 1977 the prisoners had difficulties maintaining, let alone increasing, agricultural outputs. Hamish MacDonald wrote:

> ... all say life on Buru is still arduous. Crops have not greatly improved and in some cases yields have declined because fertiliser (and) insecticide is too expensive to buy.(8)

Raphael Pura supplied more information on this matter:

> Prisoners said that several units were hard-pressed to meet their food needs and that one unit, No. 13, subsisted on cassava and corn alone. (9)

Another authoritative document was received from a church source during 1975. This one also served to confirm certain allegations which had been made about Buru. In it Buru inmates were referred to as "compulsory transmigrants", and the report also underlined the need for prisoners to receive a "guarantee to own and enjoy a fair proportion of what they have produced." This statement related to the practice of the prison authorities of appropriating a large share of the prisoners' agricultural production for their own benefit, without any compensation.

During the same year the controversy over Buru Island developed further with the exchange of views between the ILO and Indonesian representatives at the Sixtieth Session of the International Labour Conference. The Indonesians submitted a report in which they specifically stated that prisoners on Buru "are free to choose to work or not to work".(10) However, this statement was a direct contradiction of the official Buru report submitted that same year to the United Nations, in which reference was made to "compulsory agricultural projects". (11)

Both the worker and employer representatives said that the Indonesian submission was "not satisfactory" and "not sufficient". The final report stated that detainees

> had been brought to a vast area of virgin land. They were not free to leave ... They either undertook the work provided for them in Buru or starved. This was not work for which the workers had offered themselves voluntarily, but forced labour.

The Committee of Experts stated that it viewed the situation on Buru "with grave concern".(12)

Then, in 1976 Amnesty International circulated a paper to its branch organisations on the topic of Buru Island. The following is an excerpt from that report:

> The central feature of the Buru project is that the men who are held there in permanent detention are compelled to work for their sustenance, thereby freeing the government of its responsibility to provide for the basic needs of people whom it holds captive without trial ... the prisoners (are) forced to live from their own labour; and they have been deprived even of reasonable benefit from the food they have produced. (13)

However, despite this overwhelming condemnation from international organisations, the Indonesian government has consistently and categorically denied all allegations of forced labour on Buru Island.

In December 1977 the Indonesian authorities permitted a large group of foreign and Indonesian journalists to visit for four days, during which time they spoke freely with the prisoners and witnessed the release of 1,500 prisoners. Many subsequent articles appeared in the world press, including Asahi Shimbun of Japan, De Telegraf of the Netherlands and the Asian Wall Street Journal and Far Eastern Economic Review, both of which are published in Hong Kong. In addition, press reports appeared in The Melbourne Age and the U.S. publications The Washington Post and Newsweek. These reports fully substantiate the charges made about forced labour on Buru. Some have been reproduced either in summary or in their entirety in the Appendix of this paper.

These articles have made it possible to obtain a more complete picture of conditions and treatment of prisoners on Buru, and we now have a better understanding of the administrative structure of the camps. The detainees are accommodated in 21 units. There is one, named Savana Jaya, which is for prisoners who have their families with them. A handful of tapols live and work at Command Headquarters, known as Mako. There is also an isolation camp named Ancol where prisoners are held for punitive purposes.

The prisoners at Mako include painters and sculptors who work in an art workshop, and groups of detainees who make clothes, furniture and other things. The novelist Pramudya Ananta Toer has also been accommodated at Mako since 1974, with the special privilege of having his own room, a typewriter and exemption from all labour responsibilities. This enables him to devote his time to writing. (14)

By comparison with the prisoners in the other units, Mako prisoners have a somewhat better standard of living. One artist, J.M. Gultom, spends most of his time painting portraits of Army personnel. His works are sold (from the figures mentioned, they are bought at well below market price) and he receives 20 percent of the proceeds after the cost of materials is deducted. The tailors too receive a mere 20 percent of the proceeds from the clothes they make. Although grossly underpaid, these prisoners are able to save money and have even purchased such goods as watches and tape recorders. However, they have not been allowed to buy transistor radios. (15)

In contrast, prisoners in the units suffer from arduous living and working conditions. The reason for this is not only the poor quality of the soil and the lack of inputs, but also levies which they are required to pay to the authorities. Raphael Pura writes:

> They (the prisoners) estimate that each unit pays out around 30% of its production to cover the cost of fertiliser and insecticide supplied through the military command. In addition, they say that rice is deducted to supply officers and soldiers as part of the 'cost of production' and that the military command also takes an additional 30% of any surplus rice marketed through it. The detainees allege that 'commission' is divided among military officers and sold by them on the neighbouring island of Ambon. (16)

Several of the foreign journalists referred to 'transfer gifts' made by the prisoners to commanding officers when the latter leave a unit. To quote Raphael Pura again:

> Prisoners in every unit visited allege that unit commanders and other military officials expect regular payments in cash and goods from the inmates. A former university lecturer said that in his unit, the commanders acting through the barrack coordinators dunned the prisoners for about $1,200 as transfer gifts when the commanders left Buru after a one-year tour. Other detainees made similar claims, and some said that it was standard for officers to receive hundreds of dollars in cash 'gifts' when they went on leave and 'household money' for incidental expenses.(17)

When foreign journalists questioned Buru Commander Lieutenant-Colonel Karyono about these 'gifts', he "readily acknowledged that they existed but said they were 'voluntary' contributions offered officials by 'grateful' inmates."(18)

One officer, asked about the striking contrast between the conditions of the small number of Mako prisoners and the mass of prisoners held in the units, replied, according to the Indonesian journalist, Sindhunata:

> It's their fault. If some can prosper, why not others? They are all given the same opportunity. It is deliberate policy not to help those who are less prosperous, so that they can help themselves. This is the policy pursued ... guiding people to become self-supporting.(19)

The overall conclusions of the foreign journalists were unanimous and are best represented by the following two quotations:

The trip confirmed that there is substance behind many of the allegations that have been made about Buru ... They (the prisoners) spoke of forced labour from sunrise to late afternoon and said that a major part of their rice harvest was taken to feed the battalion of troops assigned as their jailers.(20)

The prisoners contend that the need to produce food to meet their needs and military demands keeps them in the fields from dawn to dusk six days a week and sometimes on Sundays and amounts to forced labour without compensation. "Is there anywhere else in the world where the prisoners feed their jailers?" asked one 46 year old detainee at Unit 2.(21)

Chapter IV

TRANSMIGRATION AND RELEASE

The Indonesian Government has been deliberately deceiving the international community over forced labour conditions in the archipelago, and consequently its present policy for the release and/or transmigration of prisoners must be examined with considerable scepticism. The Indonesian authorities announced in 1976 that all B-category political prisoners would be released by the end of 1979. This pledge was also made to the ILO during the course of discussions about forced labour. But many questions have arisen about the true intents of the release programme. This chapter will discuss the plan's evident ambiguities and contradictions, some of which were pointed out by the ILO Committee of Experts in its 1977 report, and it will be argued that, based on the information now available, transmigration cannot be construed as release.

Is the Indonesian statement that only 19,791 prisoners remain in detention correct? The figure of 19,791 prisoners for all categories was given following the announced release of 10,000 prisoners on 20th December, 1977. Two months previously, however, the Indonesian authorities had given a figure of 31,555 (see FEER report, 28 October, 1977), giving a discrepancy of 1,764.

The question of whether the current official figure is correct lies at the centre of the controversy over the present release plan. Amnesty International, in its 1977 Report on Indonesia, disagrees with the official statistics and states that there are "more than 55,000 political prisoners ... and the correct figure is probably as many as 100,000." (1) Adnan Buyung Nasution, the distinguished Indonesian human rights lawyer, has suggested several likely figures for the number of political detainees, the lowest of which is 50,000. (2) TAPOL has for several years estimated the figure at around 100,000, believing that official statistics are concerned only with prisoners held at regular prisons and camps. They ignore the prisoners held in numerous military establishments, on projects and in other places not officially acknowledged but referred to as "illegal places of detention" (tempat tahanan illegal).

Do the Indonesians intend to release all the Category B prisoners? The repeated statements by Admiral Sudomo, Chief-of-Staff of KOPKAMTIB, that all B-category prisoners will be released by the end of 1979 have since November 1977 been contradicted by his many references to the large number of 'diehards', people whose "ideological fervour is still strong".

When speaking to journalists on 23 November 1977, he was reported in several Jakarta dailies to have said that "between 30% and 40% of the remaining tapols are 'diehards'". (3) Kompas quoted him as saying that these 'diehards' would not be returned to society when the current release plan ends in 1979. (4) Sinar Harapan quoted him to the effect that these prisoners would not be released so long as they held to their beliefs. (5) Even if one accepts the official figure of 31,555 at the time of Sudomo's statement, this could mean that some 10,000 prisoners will not be set free.

The release programme is designed in such a way that it is questionable whether a detainee will be free even if allowed out of prison. The Indonesian Embassy in Washington stated in a document submitted to the US State Department in the autumn of 1977: "There are two methods of release; namely direct release to society and through resettlement." (6)

Preparations for "release through resettlement" are already underway. Admiral Sudomo stated that Rp. 320 million has already been invested to set up sixteen special transmigration camps for released B-category prisoners in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. (7) The preparations are most advanced in Central and East Kalimantan where several new camps are already operating. In North Sumatra, preparations are somewhat less advanced and appear to have reached the stage of site selection and initial construction. From reports in the Indonesian press and material received from other sources, it is already possible to identify some of these camps. But before discussing them, it is necessary first to examine how "direct release", that is to say, returning home, will operate.

The Indonesian authorities have formulated a series of criteria for determining which prisoners may obtain direct release. According to David Jenkins, these criteria are:

1. The government must be satisfied that it has succeeded in re-adjusting the mental condition of the detainee ...
2. A prisoner has to show that he was following the Pancasila way of life...
3. A detainee's family has to be prepared to receive him or her back ...
4. Former neighbours of the detainee must be prepared to receive him or her back ...
5. A job must be available for the released detainee ... (8)

Judging by the concern shown by Admiral Sudomo about 'diehards', the first and second conditions are clearly considered to be the most important. The third condition can create major problems because so many of the prisoners have lost all contact with their families during their protracted detention. For this reason, a large number of prisoners, whatever their 'ideological' qualifications, may find that the option of direct release is indefinitely closed to them.

The fifth criterion is closely related to the plan for shifting released prisoners to transmigration camps. In a press statement issued on 1 December 1976, Admiral Sudomo referred to the problem of employment opportunities, and said: "... unemployment would create fertile ground for all kinds of acts contrary to the law, and this in itself would pose a threat to the national security, particularly to law and order." (9) This, he went on, was the reason why transmigration camps were being set up.

The major obstacle to getting jobs is the restrictions placed on the kinds of work open to released detainees. Employment with government enterprises, with the Armed forces and with 'vital enterprises' (however that may be defined) is closed to them. (10) Admiral Sudomo stated that political clearance certificates are no longer required as they used to be, he also declared that all private firms employing released prisoners would be required to report to the local military authorities to enable "their supervision by both local military and (civil) government authorities". (11)

A further provision, repeated in a number of official pronouncements, that released prisoners would be under house arrest for the first six months presents an additional obstacle. Prisoners released in 1976 were placed under this restriction and in many cases it has lasted much longer than six months.

Information that has become available about prisoners released and allowed home on 20th December 1977 suggests that not all are being subjected to home detention. This appears to be the case with some at least of the 1,500 who left Buru, all of whom have returned to Java (except one reported to have opted for transmigration to Sulawesi). Also, it has been learned that tapols released from Jakarta's Salemba Prison were assured prior to their release that they would not be placed under home detention although they were asked to report if they had not acquired work within a certain period. They were also told that "the government would possibly help them in such a case".

Information at present available strongly suggests that a distinction must be drawn between prisoners released in Java or released back to Java (from Buru) and those released on other islands, notably Sumatra and Kalimantan. The current transmigration plans are centred upon Sumatra and Kalimantan, where, as was indicated above, camp preparations have proceeded furthest.

In fact, these two islands account for more than fifty percent of releases announced for December 1977.

Another set of criteria determining the type of release has been frequently referred to in the Indonesian press. These are as follows: ideological convictions, former status within banned organisations, behaviour during detention, state of health and age. (12) Indeed, the relevance of these criteria, in particular the latter two, is supported by information received from a confidential source in Indonesia during October 1977:

> The resolution of these (B-category) cases will follow two patterns: first, those who fulfil the general conditions and are strong physically and mentally will be sent to resettlement areas, and second, those who do not meet the criteria for resettlement and all women will be returned to their homes.

This assessment, said by the source to have been obtained from enquiries made with KOPKAMTIB, has been broadly confirmed by independent observers. A Dutch journalist, Guido van de Kreeke, stated that those who were released from Buru were "aged, chronically-ill and non-productive persons". (13) Hamish McDonald described those returning home from Buru as being "over 55 or those chronically ill with tuberculosis and other illnesses". (14) In a later article, he said the same thing about all those who had returned home from Nusakembangan and Ambarawa prisons on Java. (15) A letter received from a private contact in Java soon after the releases provided the following information:

> We feel safe to conclude that the prisoners released in Central Java were selected for serious ill-health.

The author of this letter cites a number of prisoners, all of whom were suffering from a combination of diseases including asthma, hypertension, tuberculosis, liver ailments, paralysis and insanity.

Further confirmation of this basis of selection in another region of the country comes from an earlier article by Hamish McDonald in which he discussed a new re-settlement camp in Kalimantan:

> According to the local Internal Security Commander, Lt.-Colonel Marsigit, 355 prisoners and their families would be moved to the new village, while only the old and sick would be entrusted to their homes. (16)

The extent to which this criterion appears to have been applied would seem to justify the conclusion that by and large, healthy male prisoners will not return to their homes but will remain isolated from society in resettlement projects.

Reports about releases in Sumatra and Kalimantan have shown that many of the released prisoners will go straight to transmigration camps or will end up in such places eventually. In Tanjung Kasau prison, North Sumatra, where the main release ceremony was held in the presence of foreign diplomats and journalists, it was announced that only 20 of the 886 prisoners chose to accept the resettlement offer. However, a report in Sinar Harapan indicates that for the rest, the final decision has not yet been taken:

> The remainder will return to their families to consult with their relatives on whether they will remain home or go for resettlement. (17)

In Central Kalimantan, where camps are known to be in a much more advanced state of preparation, 426 prisoners are reported to have greeted Admiral Sudomo when he visited the Pararapak Camp with a "spontaneous and voluntary statement" of their desire to remain at the camp as settlers. (18) This particular report raises two very serious questions: What were these prisoners doing in the camp even before they had volunteered to live there? How voluntary could such a 'spontaneous' declaration possibly have been?

In Riau, West Sumatra, at a ceremony in which 464 detainees were released, the Riau Military Commander who officiated hoped that "the released detainees would participate in work for regional development". (19) Such a statement could be dismissed as a mere opinion, were it not for the fact that transmigration projects are always presented as being integral to regional development.

It is not yet possible on the basis of information received so far to draw up a definitive picture of the ultimate fate of the several thousand prisoners who are said to have been released in Sumatra, Kalimantan and other parts of the archipelago. However, by relating what is known about the government's policies, the practice of transmigration in Buru and the widespread abuse of prisoner labour, we feel justified in raising a number of points about the transmigration programme.

It may be that those who volunteer for transmigration are being misled about conditions in the resettlement camps. Transmigrants have been promised that they will be allotted two hectares of land and a house, along with farming equipment, if they choose to resettle with their families. However, this pledge is highly suspect. Women who decided to join their husbands on Buru Island discovered that the promises made to them were untrue. Some of these women told Hamish McDonald

> ...they had been grossly misled about facilities on the island through seeing a film which was not about Buru at all ... (20)

Furthermore, there has been no mention of what will happen to single prisoners, those who have lost contact with their families or those whose families are unwilling to transmigrate. These tapols could constitute an easily exploitable workforce.

Considering the amount of forced labour in which prisoners have been compelled to engage, it is important to ask whether ex-prisoners who choose to transmigrate will find themselves doing work they were not told about beforehand. Although released, settlers will still be vulnerable to official coercion. KOPKAMTIB has stated that transmigration projects will be under the supervision of regional administrations. This does not mean that ex-tapols will no longer be subject to military coercion, because the military has penetrated all levels of government.

Already certain facts which add to this concern have been learned about two of the resettlement camps. A Tempo article states that the inhabitants of the area surrounding the Amborawang project have been prohibited from cutting down trees within the camp's boundaries. (21) This in itself would appear to be quite innocuous, except that TAPOL received a letter in September 1977 (22) quoting information from prisoners within the area, which stated that the military in charge of Amborawang have concluded contracts to supply lumber to both the Indonesian railways and a Taiwanese timber company. Prisoners in the camp are obliged to fell trees for this lumbering project.

The resettlement camp at Sibira, located on a high plateau 176 kilometres from Medan in North Sumatra, is reported to be well-suited for growing coffee. (23) The cultivation of this crop is usually carried out on a plantation scale rather than on small plots. There are grounds to fear that ex-prisoners will be sent to work on a future coffee plantation at Sibira.

There can be no doubt that the military authorities look upon tapols and ex-tapols as a reliable, hardworking labour force guaranteed to ensure successful development projects. Guido van de Kreeke has pointed out that Buru Island is probably the "largest and most successful development project organised in Indonesia." (24) The prisoners there have been forced to make it so. In the hope of achieving another such success, the Governor of East Kalimantan, Wahab Syahani, stated that the area in which Amborawang is located will become a "beachhead" for development. (25)

Does the transmigration constitute real release , or is it simply a matter of exchanging one form of isolation for another? In the report of the 1977 session of the International Labour Conference, the Committee of Experts stated that transmigrated prisoners

> may have no choice but to engage in the narrow range of mainly agricultural activities provided for in the areas to be developed under resettlement programs.
>
> ... in order to ensure the observance of the (Forced Labour) Convention, detainees who are not brought to trial should be permitted once again to enjoy full and effective freedom of choice of employment.

Ex-prisoners can only be considered to have really made a free choice if they have been given a period of genuine freedom for re-orientation and reflection away from the pressures of prison life. Furthermore, released prisoners should not only be guaranteed complete freedom to decide about transmigration, but also the right to leave resettlement projects if they so desire. However, the authorities have shown that this will not be allowed. For example, Jusuf Wanandi, a high-ranking official of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, has indicated that the prisoners who are transmigrated will be restricted in their movements for the first year on the project, and after that only allowed "to travel to and from their homes." (26) However, they will not be allowed to return home permanently. Moreover, leave of absence will be left to the discretion of the authorities and could very well be beyond the financial capabilities of most former detainees.

For most ex-prisoners, resettlement could be intolerable. One gets an idea of this by examining how both prisoners and reunited families on Buru feel about their lives in exile. The journalists who visited the island in December 1977 were unanimous in their view that inmates want nothing more than to return to Java. Hamish McDonald wrote of the "desperate wish of nearly all prisoners to leave Buru," and David Jenkins quoted novelist Pramudya Ananta Toer as saying:

> We are longing for Java ... Only about 20 or 30 people would stay if we were all given a choice. (27)

In addition, Pramudya told Newsweek magazine:

> This place should be burned down. (28)

It is the families on Buru in particular who give the strongest impression of what prisoner transmigration could be like. 175 of them live in the village of Savanajaya, and they clearly desire to leave Buru just as much as the other prisoners. David Jenkins wrote of them:

> The way tapols tell it, Savanajaya is a human lobster pot. Once wives and children enter, they may never leave again. Although nominally free, a tapol wife becomes somehow tainted by the alleged misdeeds of her husband, as do her children. (29)

An incident witnessed by Jenkins and a reporter for Tempo revealed that prisoners (or settlers; whatever one wishes to call them) in Savanajaya are not allowed to leave:

> During the visit to the island, there was a disconcerting example of the sort of human distress that can be caused through a combination of inflexible rules and bureaucratic ineptitude. Two families at Savanajaya had been told they could be going back to Java. They were overjoyed. They sold their furniture and packed their bags. They were just about to get on the pony cart to the coast when an official came and said that they would not be leaving after all. There had been a mistake, he said. It was not the policy to allow family members to leave Buru.
>
> Visiting journalists found one of the wives sitting on the floor,sobbing uncontrollably. Her husband, who seemed to have resigned himself to the news, said, "She is broken in spirit. I am afraid she may lose her mind". (underlining added) (30).

Raphael Pura described the tragic case of the woman whose husband died after she had come to Savanajaya, and who was not permitted to leave. She was later given permission to marry another prisoner on condition that they both promise never to leave Buru. (31)

If prisoners who are released to resettlement camps, as well as their families, are unable to return home when they wish, then transmigration will not be release. It will be simply another form of isolation from society. In other words, the ex-detainee will still be a prisoner.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

1. Tapol is the combination of two Indonesian words, tahanan politik. It means political prisoner.
2. _____ "KOPKAMTIB Spokesman Denies that Tapols are Doing Forced Labour" Sinar Harapan 26 June 1974.

Chapter I

1. KOPKAMTIB is the branch of the Indonesian military set up in 1965 which controls all security-related affairs.
2. G30S/PKl is the abbreviation for the 30th September Movement/ Indonesian Communist Party. It refers to the events in late September-early October 1965 when officers in the Indonesian army abducted and murdered six top generals. The Indonesian Communist Party, accused of masterminding this, was banned, along with many other legally-constituted left-wing organisations.
3. John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily An Indonesian English Dictionary Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1965 p.236
4. It is important to point out however that in discussing prisoner transmigration, the Indonesian authorities often refer to this too as "return to society". See for example, David Jenkins "Inside Suharto's Prisons" Far Eastern Economic Review October 28, 1977 p.10.
5. _____ Brief Explanation of the Buru Project Jakarta: Office of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia and the Buru Resettlement Executive Authority 1971 p.4.
6. Pancasila is the state philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia. Formulated by former President Sukarno, , it consists of five principles: Belief in God, Nationalism, Humanitarianism, Democracy and Social Justice.
7. _____ The Buru Rehabilitation Center Jakarta: Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia November, 1974 p.13

Chapter II

1. Amnesty International Indonesia London: Amnesty International Publications 1977 p.84-5
2. _____ An interview in the Bulletin of the Centre for Information on Asian Political Prisoners Vol.II no.2 28 June 1976.
3. Amnesty International Dutch Section Indonesia Special Amsterdam: Amnesty International Publications 1973 p.29

4. David Jenkins "Inside Suharto's Prisons" op. cit. p.10

5. Suara Karya 7 August 1974

6. Amnesty International Indonesia op. cit. p.86-7

7. Le Monde 1 October 1975

8. R. Sutarjo "Meninjau Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Nusakembangan" Suara Karya 15 November 1974

Chapter III

1. Dom Moraes "The Prisoners of Buru" Asia Magazine Vol.XII No.10

2. Amnesty International Dutch Section Indonesia Special op.cit. p.22

3. Supeno Suparjo "Pulau Buru juga Indonesia" Merdeka 16,17 and 18 September 1974

4. _____ The Development and Growth of the Rehabilitation Installation on Buru Island Jakarta: Office of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia and the Buru Resettlement Implementing Agency 1975 p.16 and 28

5. Hamish McDonald "Buru, the Island of Brutality" The Melbourne Age 23 December 1977

6. Raphael Pura "A Visit to Buru, Indonesia's Isle of Detention" Asian Wall Street Journal 6 January 1978

7. _____ The Development and Growth of the Rehabilitation Installation on Buru Island op. cit. p.21-3

8. Hamish McDonald "Buru, the Island of Brutality" op. cit.

9. Raphael Pura "Indonesian Detainees from Coup Bid in '65 Face a Murky Future" Asian Wall Street Journal 22 December 1977

10. _____ Provisional Record of the Sixtieth Session of the International Labour Conference Geneva, 1975 p.24

11. _____ The Development and Growth of the Rehabilitation Installation op. cit. p.19

12. _____ Provisional Record of the Sixtieth Session of the International Labour Conference Geneva, 1975 p.26-27

13. Amnesty International "Political Imprisonment on Buru Island: The Indonesian Programme of Permanent Detention" London: Amnesty International International Secretariat May 1976 p.3

14. KOPKAMTIB has possession of the seven manuscripts that Pramudya has completed since 1974. Sindhunata "Permukiman dan Inrehab Apa Bedanya?" Kompas 3 January 1978

15. Ibid

16. Raphael Pura "Indonesian Detainees from Coup Bid in '65 Face a Murky Future" op.cit.

17. Ibid

18. Ibid

19. Sindhunata: "Permukiman dan Inrehab-Apa Bedanya" op.cit.

20. David Jenkins "The Struggle for Survival on Buru" Far Eastern Economic Review 30 December 1977

21. Raphael Pura "Indonesian Detainees from Coup Bid in '65 Face a Murky Future" op.cit.

Chapter IV

1. Amnesty International Indonesia op.cit. p.9

2. _____ Melbourne Herald 2 November 1977

3. David Jenkins "Vanishing Act" Far Eastern Economic Review 13 January 1978 p.32

4. _____ "Tergantung Sikap Para Tahanan G30S Sendiri" Kompas 24 November 1977

5. _____ "10,000 'G-30-S/PKI' Bebas 15-Des.1977" Sinar Harapan 23 November 1977

6. _____ "Release of G-30-S/PKI Detainees" Washington, D.C.: Embassy of Indonesia (undated) p.5

7. _____ Admiral Sudomo quoted in "Tiga Bekas Menteri Termasuk 10,000 Tahanan Yang Dibebaskan", in Kompas 19 December 1977

8. David Jenkins "Inside Suharto's Prisons" op.cit.p.8-9

9. _____ "Press Statement of the Chief of Staff of the Command for the Restoration of Order and Security (KOPKAMTIB) on 1 December 1976" op.cit. p.2

10. _____ Berita Buana 29 December 1977

11. Ibid

12. Hamid S. Darminto "Jangan Tanya Lagi Kenapa Mereka Debebaskan" Suara Merdeka 24 December 1977

13. Guido van de Kreeke "Prisoners Make Notorious Island Reasonably Prosperous" De Telegraf 17 December 1977

14. Hamish MacDonald "Buru Detainees on Road to Freedom" Melbourne Age 21 December 1977

15. Hamish MacDonald "How Real is Indonesia's Amnesty?" Sydney Morning Herald 27 December 1977

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16. Hamish MacDonald: "Catch 22 in Plans for Freed Indonesians" Sydney Morning Herald 3 October 1977

17. _____ "10,000 Tahanan G-30-S/PKI Gol. B Dibebaskan Serentak" Sinar Harapan 21 December 1977

18. _____ "426 Tapol Golongan B Dimukimkan di Pararapak" Angkatan Bersenjata 22 November 1977

19. _____ "464 Tahanan G.30.S/PKI Gol. B Riau Dikembalikan ke Masyarakat" Angkatan Bersenjata 26 December 1977

20. Hamish MacDonald "Buru, Island of Brutality" op.cit.

21. _____ "Selamat Datang, 10,000" Tempo 24 December 1977 p.8

22. TAPOL Bulletin, No. 24, October 1977, p.2

23. _____ "Selamat Datang, 10,000" Tempo op. cit. p.7

24. Guido van de Kreeke op.cit.

25. _____ "Wongso yang Bermasa-depan di Amborawang" Kompas 30 November 1977

26. Jusuf Wanandi "An Indonesian View" Far Eastern Economic Review 2 December 1977 p.23

27. David Jenkins "The Struggle for Survival on Buru" op.cit.

28. Raymond Carroll "The Devilish Island" Newsweek 9 January 1978 p.2

29. David Jenkins "The Struggle for Survival on Buru" op.cit.

30. Ibid, David Jenkins See also "Akhirnya Mereka Sampai" Tempo 31 December 1977, p.7

31. Raphael Pura "A Visit to Buru, Indonesia's Isle of Detention" op.cit.

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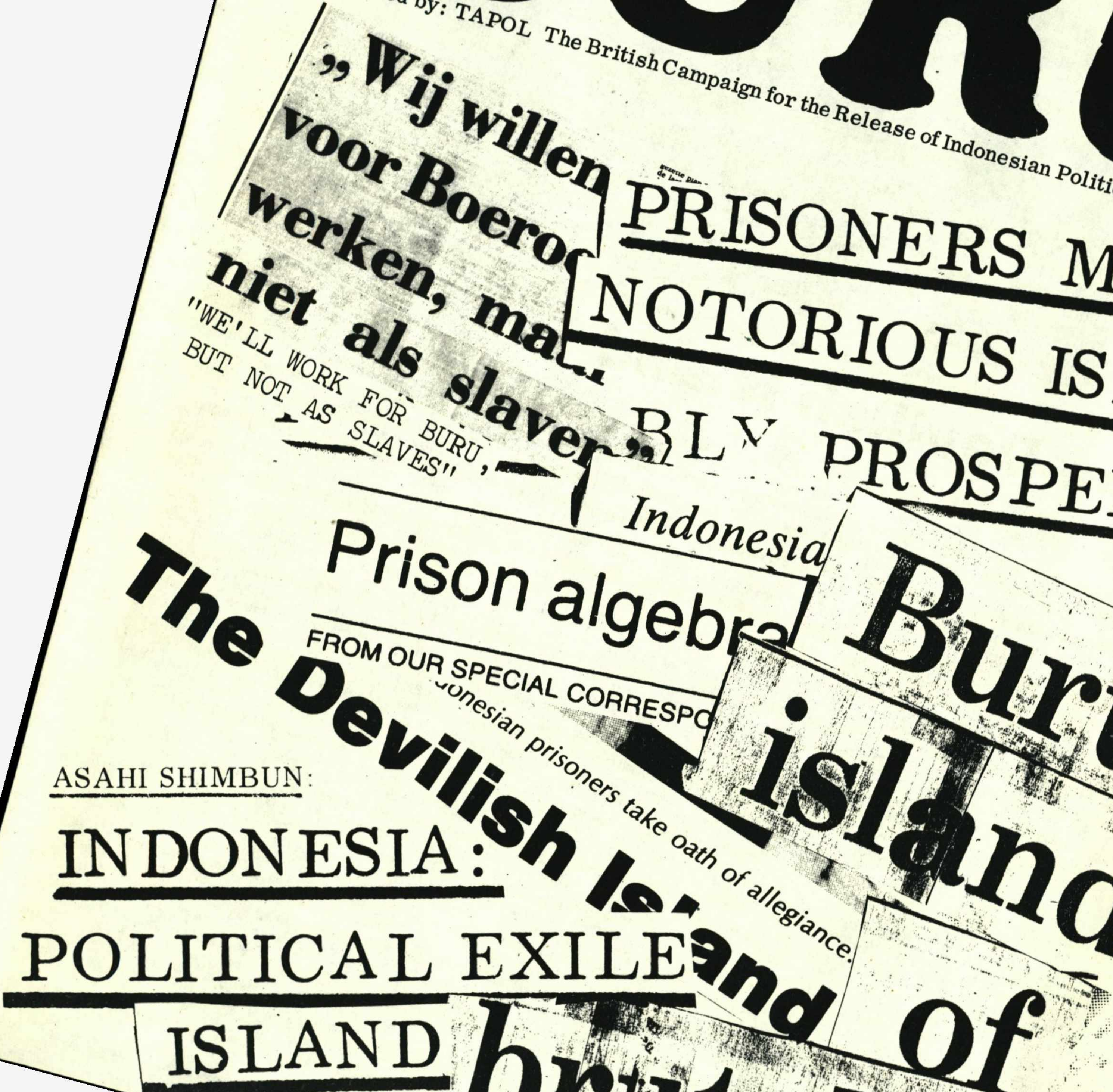

„Wij willen
voor Boero
werken, ma
niet als slaven"

"WE'LL WORK FOR BURU,
BUT NOT AS SLAVES"

PRISONERS M

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FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPO

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The Devilish Island

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INDONESIA:
POLITICAL EXILE
ISLAND

AP

Indonesian prisoners take oath of allegiance: Crocodiles and rifle butts

The Devilish Island

Hundreds of gaunt-looking men in tattered clothing lumbered off two ramshackle boats and searched the waiting crowd for once-familiar faces. Many of the men had not seen their families since 1965—when more than 150,000 Indonesians were arrested following an unsuccessful Communist coup attempt. The Jakarta government had recently released 10,000 of these political prisoners from camps across the island nation—and last week the two boats brought the first batch of former detainees from the crocodile-infested island of Buru to the east Java port of Surabaja. One prisoner died along the way of a heart attack; another died shortly after arrival. Those who survived appeared old and ill and uncertain about their future. "What is given to us is freedom on loan," said one of the prisoners. "It could be taken from us anytime."

The men who arrived at Surabaja had lived through a harrowing ordeal. From time to time in the last twelve years, stories leaked out about the corruption and brutality of Buru's prisons. The Indonesian authorities denied the charges, and they invited a group of journalists to Buru to witness the recent mass prisoner release. But what the newsmen found seemed to support some of the stories about the devilish doings on Buru.

Military police called prisoners' names through a bullhorn, stapled labels to their shirts and herded them onto barges headed for the village of Namlea. There, the prisoners were assembled on a soccer field and handed printed booklets from which they dutifully read an oath of allegiance to President Suharto. denounced Marxism-Leninism, vowed to accept all actions taken against them as necessary for national security and promised not to sue the government for being held without trial for so many years.

Sexual Abuse: But out of earshot of the guards, the prisoners told of savage beatings, sometimes with rifle butts. One prisoner, they said, had committed suicide out of shame after guards sexually abused his young daughter. Some of the inmates complained of the long hours of labor under the blazing tropical sun. "The soil here is not good for farming," one of them said. "But if we don't farm we don't eat." Many prisoners said they subsisted on only 200 grams of rice, cassava and vegetables a day.

So harsh are conditions on Buru that 40 prisoners made a suicidal attempt to escape through the jungle in 1973. According to the camp commandant, Lt. Col. Karyono, nineteen of them were found dead of starvation—or eaten by the others. The remaining 21 meekly returned to camp. Karyono said he knew nothing about prisoners being murdered by guards, but villagers at Namlea claimed they knew of six "Communist" prisoners who had been shot to death.

Most of the prisoners released in recent days were over 50 and suffering from tuberculosis or other serious diseases. Some were so crippled that they had to be carried out on stretchers. "The government knows that these people are too old and too tired to indulge in any political adventures once released in Java," said a camp official. Lest they be tempted, however, the "freed" men will remain under house arrest for six months and then be restricted to their home villages.

The prisoners left behind faced an even bleaker future. Hasyim Rachman, a former editor of the left-wing paper, Bintang Timur, was placed in confinement shortly after speaking to foreign correspondents, and other inmates feared punishment once the press departed. "After the last journalists' visit in 1971, many of us were beaten up by the soldiers," one prisoner said. "I was one of them because I was working without a shirt on when a journalist walked past and remarked to an official how thin I was. The guards said I should have covered up." Another prisoner, novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer, angrily told NEWSWEEK: "This place should be burned down. The government has deprived me of my basic rights for twelve years, and for this I am very bitter."

After the release of the 10,000 inmates, the Indonesian Government contended that there were only about 20,000 more political prisoners left in its jails. President Suharto's plan is to release them in two stages over the next two years. But one government official admitted that "we have not really come to any concrete plan on what to do with Buru yet or what to do with the hard-core Communists." And in a statement that welcomed the recent releases, Amnesty International, the London-based human-rights organization that won the Nobel Peace Prize for 1977, estimated that as many as 100,000 more political prisoners still lingered in Suharto's camps.

—RAYMOND CARROLL with bureau reports

Newsweek, January 9, 1978

Indonesia

Prison algebra

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Jakarta

Free, sort of, in Buru

"In no other country of the world are so many political prisoners held without trial for so many years." That was Amnesty International's verdict on Indonesia in October, and it may have had something to do with the release of some 10,000 prisoners this week. Most of these people had been detained since the attempted communist coup in 1965 and had spent the past dozen years in prison without being tried.

This week's prisoners were somewhat luckier than the 2,500 released last year, in that they were set free with fewer conditions. On December 17th Indonesia's intelligence chief Admiral Sudomo announced that the released prisoners will be free to return to their homes "but they will still be under the supervision of local authorities until they become good citizens". Diplomats were told earlier that homecomings will be allowed provided the ex-prisoners are "acceptable" to family and neighbours, and can find a job—two big ifs—and also avoid any political activities. Some prisoners may be obliged to "volunteer", like last year's lot, for resettlement in remote areas such as Buru Island, which houses the largest prison camp in Indonesia. Admiral Sudomo said that 16 settlement areas will be open to the released prisoners.

The government has already resettled about 75,000 families from overcrowded Java in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Amnesty regards forced resettlement as an easy way to keep tabs on former prisoners—which it is. But officials have a less dastardly motive for seeking recruits for the country's "transmigration" programme. This programme, which aimed at resettling 200,000 families by the end of 1978, has fallen far behind schedule. The World Bank has made a tentative offer of a $1 billion loan after 1979 but has threatened to give little or nothing unless the first settlements look successful and unless the government stops making ex-prisoners join up.

Pressure from Amnesty, the World Bank and President Carter has kept President Suharto to his timetable this year. But tens of thousands of prisoners still remain in Indonesian jails and prison camps, though estimates vary from Amnesty's high of 100,000 to the government's own suspect figure of 29,000. In August Mr Suharto promised to release a further 10,000 detainees in 1978, and the remainder in 1979. All these are "B" category detainees who are suspected of having been involved in the 1965 coup but have not been brought to trial because of insufficient evidence. The government admits that there are another 1,900 or so "A" category detainees ostensibly awaiting trial: in 10 years military tribunals have managed to try—and convict—fewer than 1,000 people. Another 1,000 prisoners have not yet been classified. The president recently said that most "A" prisoners will be tried by the end of 1979, and all others will be downgraded to "B" status and made eligible for release.

President Suharto's algebra at least spells a marginal improvement on the situation described by Amnesty in October. There are domestic political reasons for the president to appear more accommodating. In November university students took to the streets of Jakarta, Surabaya and Bandung to protest against government corruption. These were the first serious demonstrations since the riots at the time of the Japanese prime minister's visit in January, 1974.

Unlike President Marcos in the Philippines and President Park in South Korea, who have both recently faced campus revolts, Mr Suharto did not crack down on the students. Only a few students were arrested, and ministers were despatched to meet student leaders and university deans. One dean told your correspondent that he was instructed to permit all forms of dissent on campus, but was warned that the army would break up demonstrations if they "spilled over" into the towns. An armed forces' journal said in late November that student activity was "inevitable" and should even be encouraged if played according to the rules.

This unlikely tolerance on the part of the army has its roots in Mr Suharto's own political strength. Although he is up for re-election next March, he has no challengers; and he is hoping that by avoiding unpleasant incidents over the next few months he can ensure that the vote—in the mostly handpicked national congress—will be unanimous and uneventful.

If things go swimmingly, he may even be in a position to choose the general he wants as his successor, replacing the Sultan of Jogjakarta who is now the civilian figurehead in a government rooted in the army. The president is also importing 2m tonnes of rice: without it, food shortages in January and February, after one of Indonesia's worst-ever harvests, would almost certainly bring the anti-government riots he desperately wants to prevent.

This article was originally printed in The Melbourne Age, December 23, 1977.

Buru, the isla

HAMISH McDONALD, "The Age" m
journalists who visited Buru to see th
political prisoners.

PROFESSOR SALEH ISKANDAR was taking it all with wry humor. "We've just been up to the town square to practise our release, but I'm afraid we are not very good at drill and exasperated these military men."

His eyes beamed with mock ingenuity behind thick spectacles and his lips and goatee beard twisted around a wildly angled front tooth. Twelve years of prison had clearly taught this former teacher of Indonesian his safest defence.

A day before Professor Saleh, 57, had been holding court under a tree 20 kilometres inland from Buru's tiny capital, Namlea. "I would still like nothing better than to go to court to prove that I'm innocent," he said.

Yet here he was in Namlea, going through the motions, swearing an oath renouncing communist rebellion. He had even helped the camp commander check the grammar beforehand. No doubt a final charade was worth release from the "rehabilitation installation" of Buru Island.

There is no other escape from Buru. Surrounded by a blue, shark-infested sea, the island is in a back-water of the archipelago, some 2000 kilometres from home in Java. It is reached by a day-long boat trip from Ambon or a half-hour flight by a Dakota aircraft that lands on a coral airstrip still surrounded by bomb-craters from World War II.

A small boat takes you from Namlea across a wide bay to a low swampy shore and passes through a fishing village built on stilts at the mouth of the Waingapu River. It chugs for four hours between walls of sago palms, tall reeds and trees trailing vines into the brown water. The crocodiles have learnt to disappear when they hear the motor.

There has been only one attempt to run. In November, 1974, some 48 men escaped from one of Buru's 21 camps into the jungle. Only 21 survived the jungle to surrender and face severe beatings and indefinite detention at a jail in Namlea.

Not only is there a battalion of guards and a hostile jungle but the prisoners are hated by the semi-wild inhabitants of the Buru interior for occupying their land. As recently as three weeks ago, a prisoner was speared to death.

The boat arrives at a landing stage, where a work detail of prisoners is waiting to carry baggage up to the simple wooden huts of the Buru Island "inrehab headquarters". One quietly introduces himself in fluent English. It is Basuki Effendi, 49, once a leading film maker in Jakarta, now a prison laborer.

"Where are you from? Australia? I have a friend there, a film maker called Cecil Holmes, we once attended a film festival in Prague. Of course, that was 20 years ago when we were both young men."

It was the first of many scenes in which men with the appearance of tramps revealed themselves to be highly educated and desperate to make contact with the outside world. Many of Buru's prisoners, who now number about 10,150 with the release of 1500 on Tuesday, were once prominent intellectuals, arrested for their association with communist-controlled organisations.

Despite some attempts at shepherding by officials, the 20 foreign and local journalists who spent three days in the prison camps were able to talk at length with the prisoners.

Some risked reprisals by talking openly in front of guards. Hasyim Rachman, 59, former chief editor of the Leftist Jakarta newspaper **Bintang Timur** (Eastern Star), was one who talked recklessly to the Pressmen about the beatings and hardship and the desperate wish of nearly all prisoners to leave Buru.

He was immediately led away by the arm and interrogated for several hours in a guard officer's house. For this reason it seems risky to use the names of the dozens of other prisoners I spoke to out of earshot of officials.

After the last visit by a Press party in 1971, many were beaten even if they had not talked.

"I was one of them because I was working without a shirt when a journalist walked past and remarked to an official how thin I was. The guards beat me for not covering myself," said one detainee.

One prisoner gave me his story, which was typical of most. Arrested soon after the September 30, 1965 coup he was shuttled around jails in Jakarta for months.

"In the Tanggerang jail, for example, I was witness to two or three men dying each day because their food was terribly bad and they had dysentery," he said. "And many were hungry. If they received a parcel from their family —say some cassava if it was a poor person or peasant — they couldn't restrain themselves to eat it properly because of their hunger. They just wolfed it all down and a few minutes later they were dead."

Released prisoners wait for boats to take them d

The prisoner said he and hundreds of others were assembled on Nusakambangan Island, near Cilacap on the south coast of Java. "We were then brought here to Buru on a very old ship that soon after sank, I heard," he said.

"I was put right in the bows, at the peak of which was the toilet. We tried to keep it clean, but it kept blocking and flooding, and when the ship hit a wave the human waste just flowed back into the prisoners' quarters.

"Everything was broken or rusted up. The ship was groaning and creaking as though it was breaking up. A bicycle would have been faster. We were not allowed on deck, locked down below. Sometimes the ship stopped in mid-ocean, after breaking down.

"We arrived in Namlea. A few friends were made to get off to prepare a kitchen, about 15 to 20 men. They landed for the first time. I was surprised because on boarding the ship they had said to us: 'Have a good trip towards your new life.'

"The first to land were greeted

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an in Indonesia, was with a party of
e release of some of the island's 10,000
Here is his report.

wnriver to Namlea, the main port of Buru Island.

with blows from rifle-butts. I was shocked. But we got down, it was all right, and we stayed at a place called Jike Kacil for a few days.

"My group was the first to go into Buru, into the interior along the Waingapu. It took six hours to go five kilometres, skirting around fallen trees and with thorns tearing holes in you everywhere.

"When we arrived at the site we were woken up before dawn and told to do exercises under the command of a sergeant who we couldn't see because of the dark. Our first work was to clear roads, and because we had no tools we had to tear out the sword grass with our hands until they bled.

"We knew that our food allocation was 600 grams of rice a day, some dried fish and salt. But it turned out that was only for the first week. Then it became 500 grams. and in three months became bulgur (low grade wheat) that had rust from the ship in it so we got sick. But we had to work very hard under guard. One man was down to 29 kilos. We had to eat anything: lizards, lizard eggs, cats, dogs, snakes, birds, anything we could catch. And beatings kept coming beyond reason."

More waves of prisoners kept arriving. And initial hopes that Buru would become self-supporting and prosperous quickly faded. The soil was poor, insect pests ate the crops and no local stone was available for permanent retaining walls, irrigation channels and road surfaces. The local timber quickly rots

Medicine was often not available. "We used to have what was called 'special medicine'," said one prisoner. "If you got sick in the stomach, the guard would give you a punch in the belly. If you had toothache, you'd get a punch in the mouth."

Beatings were routine and occasionally caused death from injuries or suicide. The staging camp of Jike Kecil became a punishment camp. Prisoners allege, with great consistency, that sadistic guards carried out vicious beatings and torture. In some cases that were cited, prisoners were deprived of water and fed salted food so that they drank their own urine in desperate thirst. One who allegedly died of this treatment was officially reported as having hung himself, the prisoners said.

According to dozens of separate accounts, Jike Kecil was the scene of deliberate murder. One day in 1973 a group of six prisoners collecting timber angered a guard. He shot one man dead. Then he took the remaining five back, lined them up and shot them one by one in the chest with a pistol. Only one survived.

Conditions started improving in 1974, the prisoners say, and took a dramatic change for the better last year. The punishment centre, which had been moved to a camp ironically named Ancol after a seaside resort in Jakarta, has been turned into a normal camp. Beatings are now only occasional.

A few like the author Prajmoedya Ananta Toer — recognised as Indonesia's leading modern novelist — were freed from farm work at the end of 1973. Pramoedya has since written eight novels, set perhaps wisely in the middle ages, all laboriously typed in book-form. He was allowed to receive an English translation of his short-stories I had brought, the first time he had seen such a copy.

However all say life on Buru is still arduous. Crops have not greatly improved and in some cases yields have declined because fertiliser insecticide is too expensive to buy.

Regular heavy deductions from production are made by the guards, even though they are officially maintained by the Government. Extra produce such as poultry and eggs are not normally consumed by the prisoners but sold to buy clothes, soap and medicine.

Every six months when a camp commander goes on leave or finishes his assignment his prisoners are forced to give a "farewell gift" of 500,000 rupiah (about $1080) from sales of their rice, eggs and handicrafts. Some units also pay a monthly contribution of about 50,000 rupiah (about $112) to their commanders.

While the camps have a total of seven doctors, two of them inmates, and thus better provided for than the general Indonesian population, medicine is not free even for desperate cases, the prisoners said. In one unit 17 men with advanced tuberculosis rely on their mates to buy medicine. If money cannot be found, their treatment simply lapses.

The position of the 175 families who came to join their menfolk in a special unit called Savanajaya is also criticised. Some said they had been forced to come. Most said they had been grossly misled about facilities on the island through seeing a film which was not about Buru at all. They said they are confined to the island, and their children are not allowed to carry on their education in Ambon after passing through Namlea's junior high school.

"Tuan, please tell me, what is our position, are we free?" one 20-year-old youth asked me.

While at Savanajaya we witnessed the mass wedding of 15 couples who have been kept on ice over the past 12 months for such an occasion. "We have several kinds of corve (forced labor) here," said one detainee. "Corve for carrying the baggage of military men, corve for planting rice, now we have a marriage corve."

All couples had to swear to remain on Buru for the rest of their life before permission to marry was given.

Despite the recent improvement, prisoners say they are set against Government suggestions that they return here as free settlers after their release, which is promised for all before the end of 1979.

Says one source familiar with Buru: "Only 2 or 3 per cent would like to stay here and some others would like to go to other areas for transmigration such as Sulawesi or Seram. But not here. The memories are too black."

ASAHI SHIMBUN: Translation from Japanese

INDONESIA: A LOOK AT THE POLITICAL EXILE ISLAND OF BURU

Held 12 Years Without Even Knowing Reason For Arrest

Buru Island, Moluccas Island Group, December 20.
(From Special Correspondent, Masuko.)

On 20 December, two large-sized landing craft carrying 1,500 people left Buru Island, known internationally as a place of exile for political prisoners. The craft headed for the island of Java. The passengers were political prisoners, held captive for 12 years and now being released and returned to their homes.

Despite criticism from human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, the situation on Buru Island has remained shrouded in mystery. However, the Indonesian Government has now decided to try or release over 34,000 people by 1979, and the processing of the first 10,000 people has begun. Taking this as an opportunity, I went to see "the forbidden island".

Note: Category B political prisoners are those who are alleged to have participated in the G30S/PKI affair (September 30th Movement/Indonesian Communist Party). Specifically, there is alleged to be reason to believe they were implicated but there is not sufficient evidence to bring them to court. Thus they have been held up till now without trial.

The other political prisoners include: Category A (participated directly in the affair, and scheduled for trial — about 1,900 people); Category C (believed to have participated indirectly in the affair, a less grave classification). Approximately 540,000 of this Category were all released by the end of 1975. And others.

No Doctors for the Sick
"Freedom — It is for Real This Time?"

Buru is an isolated island, about one and a half times the size of Bali. It is located to the west of Ambon, about 2,000 kilometers from Jakarta. It became a place of exile for political prisoners in 1969. Since then, mainly male Category B prisoners from camps in Java have been sent there. It now has a prisoner population of about 11,600 people.

As camp commander, Lieut-Colonel Karyono (52) boasts, the camp has neither guard towers nor barbed wire. There are ploughed fields and chickens pecking at feed. There is a Moslem mosque and a soccer field. Suddenly, a farmer in a straw hat came up to me and started speaking to me in fluent English. Except for the talk about human rights, etc, the atmosphere was hardly any different from that in a village in Java.

However, the depth of the feelings of dissatisfaction and opposition among the political prisoners far surpasses what it was according to Colonel Karyono. This reporter visited the camp for five days. During that time, I spoke to more than a hundred people. When the guards were not present, they all talked about past occurrences and criticised the present situation. In what follows, I will exclude things I heard from only one person or which are unverifiable; I will include only those things regarding which several sources were available.

Fear

On the night of 12 December, 1974, 48 prisoners attempted a joint escape from Camp No. 2 which is situated about two kilometers west of (camp) headquarters. Twenty-one of them were caught and the rest were never heard of again. It is believed they died of starvation in the jungle. The prisoners say that all the inmates of Camp No. 2 were held collectively responsible, and that they were beaten half to death. The re-captured prisoners are now being held in the village of Namlea (capital of Buru).

Sickness

The released prisoners included people who had to be carried by stretcher. One of them was a 37-year old man who was suffering from cancer. His pulse was being taken and there was a vacant look in his eyes. Probably he was returning home only to die.

Many of the remaining prisoners are suffering from diseases. Particularly numerous are those suffering from tuberculosis. In Camp No. 2, for instance, it is estimated that of the one thousand inmates, about seven percent have the disease. It is said that there are sixteen lepers on Buru.

In Camp No. 2, there is a sanatorium which was constructed in 1975 by the prisoners on their own. Reserved only for the critically ill, there were 17 patients there. Coughing the weak cough characteristic of those suffering from tuberculosis, they told me they need PAS (para-aminosalicyclic acid) and streptomycin. However, (camp) headquarters does not recognise the sanatorium. The prisoners say that no doctor has ever come. (According to Colonel Karyono, the number of political prisoners who have died since 1969 is 296.)

Communists

Without exception, every one of the prisoners insisted that he was not a communist. Most said that they have never been told why they were arrested. One prisoner said that he had to be (sic) beaten with a chair because he asked why he had been arrested.

In Camp No. 2, I talked to a young man aged 21 years whose name is Muryani. In 1972, he fell from a tall tree and became hemi-phegic (paralysed down one side). With the help of acupuncture several months previously, he was able to get up, and he walked with the aid of a stick. He said that at the age of nine, his father was arrested and they were both taken to a prison in Central Java. For some reason, Muryani was also branded a political prisoner. In 1969, he was separated from his father and sent to Buru. When I asked him if he would like to return, he grasped both my hands and nodded in the affirmative like a small child. I heard that there were similar cases in Camps No. 1 and 3.

Homesickness

In Camp No. 4, 179 political prisoners are living with their families. With the objective of getting released political prisoners to migrate from overcrowded Java, the government, starting in 1973, encouraged families by providing one hectare of farmland.

Even when they were put on board the ships, the political prisoners still displayed anxiety on their faces. Among them were prisoners who had been transferred from one camp to another as many as six times. The inmates of the newest camp on Buru, Camp R, said that when they were transported to Buru, they had been told that they were to be released. "This time, it should be for real, shouldn't it?" the prisoners repeatedly asked me.

DE TELEGRAF:

PRISONERS MAKE NOTORIOUS ISLAND REASONABLY PROSPEROUS

Guido van de Kreeke, correspondent of the Dutch daily, De Telegraf paid a five-day visit to Buru, earlier than the large group of foreign journalists who visited the island, and reported his impressions in De Telegraf on 17 December 1977.

Following are some quotations from his report:

* * * * * * * * *

The River Wayapur is like an enormous trap which penetrates the island of Buru. At least 11,000 prisoners have entered this trap in the past seven years. No-one has ever returned. Therefore this first day of Christmas will see a most dramatic event when two naval landing craft will collect 1,500 aged, chronically-ill and non-productive prisoners from Buru and deliver them to Surabaya . . . . The big question is whether the approximately 10,000 prisoners who will remain on Buru in 1978 will obtain total freedom. One government spokesman said: "Their status will be as prisoners and ex-prisoners, but they will remain there, although it will be with greater freedom."

It is certain that the final goal of all activities on Buru is transmigration. It is a word more and more often used when there is talk about relieving the serious over-population in Java . . . . Buru, the place to which some ten thousand prisoners were sent whose sole way for survival was to cultivate the land has therefore become the largest and possibly the most successful development project organised in Indonesia.

However sour it may sound, large areas of wild Buru have, with the help of imprisoned intellectuals, been transformed into Javanese villages. Altogether 3,500 hectares have been brought under cultivation. The prisoners have, by their united efforts, ensured themselves a reasonable existence above that of the average Indonesian . . . . It is certain that the Government will not abandon this development project. Efforts have been made to persuade prisoners to bring their wives over for permanent settlement but they have not met with any marked success. Former farmers who lost their land like to talk about permanent settlement but intellectuals are dying to return to Java.

* * * * * * * * *

Beside me stands Lieut-Colonel Karyono, the camp commander who says mockingly: "This is no Siberia. There are no searchlights, no machine-gun posts, no barbed wire."

No Siberia! The sweat pours down. No barbed wire! Isn't the wall of the jungle higher than any barbed wire? And what about the story I heard of the 40 men who made an escape attempt, of whom 20 died?

But where are the 11,000 prisoners? I see only a few men walking behind slowly-moving oxen through the rice fields . . . . During the day, I was led through this model Indonesian society. Artists are working in studios. There is a tape recorder with loudspeakers, and each of the 21 units into which the prisoners are divided has its own furniture-making shop, rice-hulling, carpentry and shops where everything can be bought. But the one thing lacking is the sound of women's and children's voices. Every time I can, I try to talk to the prisoners. Sometimes, right in the middle of the commander's room, someone comes over to me to cry their heart out. And in the evenings, many secret thoughts are confided in me.

"Freedom? We have often heard about that. We first heard about releases from the TV."

In the barrack where the filing system is kept, they are working late into the night. All details, dossiers, photos, etc, are examined. Commander Karyono selects, Jakarta decides. The military say: "Most of them want to stay here. At home they have lost everything, often including their wives. Their former neighbours won't have them back."

An excitable man, Ruspanadi, formerly a harbour-master, said out loud in the middle of the commander's room: "This is a real hell to suffer, especially for the women and children." As he talks, he is watching an American cartoon film on the TV. . . . (He) feels that the situation has improved in the last four years. "And we understand that things can only improve if we cooperate with the military commanders of the camp. But an enforced stay here of eight years is against all humanity."

* * * * * * * * *

Generously he says: "For Indonesia's healthy development, there must be transmigration. Even this project of Buru must continue . . . . I do not object to living here but I don't want to live here as a farmer. I want to live here as a free man, as an engineer so that I can use my knowledge for the development of the country."

According to him, more than half the people here think like this. "We must do our best to develop this island, with devotion and not without payment, not as slaves but on our own terms."

. . . In Unit R, which no-one from the outside has been allowed to inspect until now, there is a barrack full of tuberculosis patients. They complain bitterly that they don't get enough to eat, nor do they get proper medicine. I heard later that they would all be released. Missionaries and ambassadors also heard about these shortages, but none of the medicines sent seem to have reached them.

In Jakarta, the Dutch Ambassador said that as an official representative of another country, he is not allowed to visit a camp like Buru . . . . He also says that besides the release of 10,000 prisoners, lists will be available for the ambassadors to inspect. . . .

THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW:
"The Struggle for Survival on Buru"
by David Jenkins

A Summary

David Jenkins, the Far Eastern Economic Review Jakarta correspondent, was among the journalists who visited Buru to witness the prisoner releases. His report was published in the 30 December 1977 issue of the Review. Like the other writers, Jenkins was allowed to observe activities in the camp and speak with many detainees, including some of the "most articulate and most outspoken big-name prisoners." He stated:

"The trip confirmed that there is substance behind many of the allegations that have been made about Buru. Prisoners on the island painted a picture of hardship and adversity in a hostile environment far from their native Java. They told of systematic beatings by military police and soldiers, particularly during the early days of the settlement.

"They spoke of forced labour from sunrise to late afternoon and said that a major part of their rice harvest was taken to feed the battalion of troops assigned as their jailers. They spoke of men who had been driven to suicide by the harsh regimen imposed by military commandants."

Jenkins seemed to feel that conditions on Buru these days are relatively good in comparison with those in prisons on Java. However, he emphasized throughout his report that the prisoners are exceedingly unhappy and homesick, quoting Pramudya Ananta Toer as having said, "We are longing for Java. Only 20 or 30 people would stay if we were all given a choice." The detainees' isolation is heightened because they have little access to news of the outside world, and because the mail service is so slow. Basuki Effendi, the film director, told Jenkins that the last letter that he had received had taken 18 months to travel to Buru from Jakarta.

One of the most important points of the Jenkins report is that all of the detainees whom he interviewed asserted that "it was quite correct to speak of prisoners doing forced labour on Buru." They claimed that no one is paid for the work that is required of them.

"The prisoners' only regular income is from selling eggs or by making musical instruments and toys. A former economics student, arrested in Semarang in 1965 at the age of 22, said he made Rupiah 200-300 (50-75 US cents) a month selling ducks' eggs to the communal store. This was just enough to buy things like tobacco, cigarette papers, soap and aspirin."

The article also documented specific instances of torture and killings by the prison authorities. For example, a detainee stated, "One man who was beaten by his unit commander could not take it anymore and killed himself by drinking insecticide." Other persons alleged that five tapols "were murdered by guards at the Jiku Kecil jail near the town of Namlea following wrongful accusations made by informers seeking exemption from heavy work."

In addition, Jenkins discussed the life faced by families that are quartered in the prison settlement of Savanajaya, stating that they had as many complaints as the single men.

"The way tapols tell it, Savanajaya is a human lobster pot. Once wives and children enter, they may never leave again. Although nominally free, a tapol wife becomes somehow tainted by the alleged misdeeds of her husband, as do her children.

"Savanajaya has no senior high school and young people who want to continue their education on the nearby island of Ambon say they have been refused permission. The commandant of Buru Island, Colonel Karyono, says their requests are still being 'processed'.

"During the visit to the island, there was a disconcerting example of the sort of human distress that can be caused through a combination of inflexible rules and bureaucratic ineptitude. Two families at Savanajaya had been told they could be going back to Java. They were overjoyed. They sold their furniture and packed their bags. They were just about to get on the pony cart to the coast when an official came and said they would not be leaving after all. There had been a mistake, he said. It was not the policy to allow family members to leave Buru.

"Visiting journalists found one of the wives sitting on the floor, sobbing uncontrollably. Her husband, who seemed to have resigned himself to the news said: 'She is broken in spirit. I am afraid she may lose her mind.'"

TO WHAT FUTURE ARE THEY RELEASED?

At a symbolic ceremony attended by diplomats and foreign correspondents in Sumatra yesterday 886 Indonesian political prisoners were released. They were part of the 10,000 whose release was promised many months ago by the powerful security organization. Many have been more than ten years in detention without trial. Next year 10,000 more will follow and in 1979 a final 10,000. All these are in category B, those deemed to have been involved in the 1965 coup but for whom evidence is insufficient. There still remain 1,925 category A prisoners awaiting trial for their active participation in the coup and another 1,125 of cases still not classified.

It may be wondered whether the Indonesian Government deserves any credit for these releases in face of constant criticism from bodies such as Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists. Even allowing for the figures—which Amnesty believes to be understated—what of the prisoners' guilt? Whatever the Indonesian Government may choose to believe, many outside observers think that the 1965 coup was initiated by a left-wing group of army officers and not by the Indonesian Communist Party as such. This makes the guilt attributed to any member of that party and many thousands more alleged to have communist sympathies a post-coup assumption and no more.

These are the arguments from the past. What of the future for those released? Have they been given their freedom? We are told that those leaving the camp yesterday appeared apathetic towards their release. And well they might be. A renunciation of their communist ideology and a pledge of loyalty to President Suharto given at the ceremony was not the only thing required of them. They also had had to show that in the camp they were following a way of life in accordance with the approved doctrine of panchsila. Then their families had to accept them back, which many have been unwilling to do lest the security of the family might thereby be endangered. At one women's camp the commandant admitted that 95 per cent of prisoners' families had refused to receive their relatives. And even when families are brave enough the consent of neighbours is also needed.

When all these hurdles are overcome the prisoner must show that he has a guaranteed job to go back to. The rare few who pass all these tests must still face six months of house detention followed by six months more of restriction to town or village during which weekly reporting to four different government organizations will be required of them. Obviously the majority will fail to meet such onerous stipulations. For them, scattered over the Indonesian islands, are resettlement centres awaiting "volunteers". These are mostly in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi and those who are from those parts have at least the hope of a life lived within reach of the homes that they could visit. Java has no room to speak of for resettlement. For the majority from that over-populated island resettlement means desolate islands like Buru or such similar settings that Indonesia offers as the tropical equivalent of Siberia. They will get land and material to build a house with but that is not very promising when their new freedom amounts to moving from one camp to another.

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